

## Maruška Svašek (ed.): Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe

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doubt that welfare institutions have played and will play a crucial role in limiting the negative effects in income and social inequality. They have helped to reduce not only the negative repercussions of the economic shock, but have also helped to maintain a sense of public responsibility and solidarity, which has reinforced social cohesion during these difficult times' (p. 213).

At the end of the book, Cerami (p. 172) responds to crucial questions such as which patterns of transformation Central and Eastern European welfare states are really following. In this respect, the author raises questions as to whether the CEE states are silently acquiring the characteristics in force in the West or whether they are successfully adapting and recombining characteristics valid during communism with the new emergent requirements of post-communist societies. The response that Cerami (p. 173) gives is that CEE welfare states were by no means locked-in in their path of extrication from state-socialism, but were capable of highly innovative reform, which took place also in later stages of development.

In sum, this book presents a useful compilation of various social policy styles in the new member states and of secondary data on various socio-economic figures related to poverty, income distribution and social transfers, and some public survey results regarding attitudes towards a socially responsible welfare state. Alongside this, Cerami pursues a theoretical and empirical discussion that is convincing to varying degrees. Whereas the empirical data are widely available elsewhere, the book's theoretical discussion can be interesting for researchers on social policy in CEE.

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**Maruška Svašek (ed.): *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe***

New York and Oxford 2006: Berghahn Books, 224 pp.

Emotional dimensions of socio-political processes have been attracting growing interest in anthropology in recent years. This collection of nine ethnographic studies focusing on Central and Eastern Europe highlights the role of emotions in various aspects of post-socialist transformations. The editor sets two main aims: 1) to contribute to a wider theoretical debate on the significance of emotions in politics, and 2) to advance our understanding of social and political changes in the post-socialist context by bringing emotions to the forefront of an anthropological analysis. The volume offers a number of interesting and unique ethnographies of changing property relations, uneven economic developments, dynamics of ethnic identities and inter-ethnic relations, transformations of local political structures and institutions, and reinterpretations of national history in various parts of Central and Eastern Europe. However, as a whole, it does not successfully accomplish either of its main theoretical aims. The analytical contribution of its focus on emotions is questionable, its 'post-socialist' framing risks essentialising and homogenising the region, and the authors' methodological choices are not clear enough, which makes the studies less convincing.

How can a focus on emotions contribute to our understanding of politics and the dynamics of socio-economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe? A number of general claims about emotions are reiterated throughout the book: the focus on emotions is necessary in order to fully understand political processes; emotions are always embedded in contexts and socio-cultural, political-economic practices; emotions are formed through specific circumstances and emotions should be seen

as social actions rather than individual and private states. These statements are repeatedly presented as innovative and counter-intuitive conclusions in the studies. However, they are almost never related to the literature, where 'political' would be examined as stripped of its affective dimensions. In other words, it is not made clear what exactly we lose if emotions are not at the centre of our analysis. This makes some of the conclusions appear less critical and questions the added value of the focus on emotions.

To constitute a meaningful analytical category, emotions should be clearly defined. However, in the present collection, emotions as subjects of study range from nostalgia, euphoria, mutual sympathy, social suffering, shame, feelings of loss and anger, hatred, trust and distrust to fear, nationalist pride and many others. Besides, they are approached at different levels of analysis: as embodied feelings, as conventional displays of sentiments in dramatic situations, or as discursive strategies to be used for various political purposes. These levels are not always clearly delineated but tend to be brought together in general claims about the centrality of emotions which, in the end, do not really advance our understanding of the social realities under study. For example, Maruška Svašek's study of a Czech borderland village describes Sudeten Germans' highly emotional bodily memories of spaces as they come to visit houses from which they were expelled after the Second World War. They are discussed next to the strong emotional determination of a Dutch entrepreneur who invested in buying houses in the village and surrounding lands in order to turn them into a pheasant shoot. His actions are depicted as driven by frustration and anger with local bureaucrats and with local inhabitants who have other (also emotionally charged) ideas about the future of their village. Svašek draws on these diverse emotional displays to conclude that: 'Spe-

cific emotional dynamics have been central to the rapidly transforming property relations in the post-Cold War Czech-German border area' (p. 110). Such a conclusion, however, does not help us to understand how the centrality of emotions impacts on the property claims of these social actors and how it influences the power dynamics in the village.

Conceptual clarity is certainly not advanced by the use of theoretically underdeveloped concepts such as 'emotional capital', 'sentimental dramas', or 'emotional economy' that seem to serve as little more than catchy labels for a variety of phenomena, which could be explained by more established vocabulary. 'Emotional capital' is particularly popular in the book. It is discussed in the introduction and in three of the chapters. While it is always provided with a brief – as if self-explanatory – reference to Bourdieu, its use boils down to an idea that emotions can be invested into and manipulated for political aims. Patrick Heady and Liesl L. Gambold Miller claim that memories of life under the Soviet Union can be seen as a source of 'emotional capital'; Dimitrina Mihaylova says the same about the Pomaks' displays of 'social suffering' in Bulgarian tobacco-producing borderlands, as they struggle for more just economic redistribution; and Zlatko Skrbušić shows that in a diasporic environment, an emotionalised reinterpretation of Slovenian national history can be used as a political tool and thus represents a form of 'emotional capital'.

The majority of the topics covered in this collection deal with situations of political polarisation, conflict, protest or emergency, where strong emotional responses seem rather commonsensical and hardly a surprising discovery. They are often treated both as a cause and an effect and thus tend to be neither explained nor explanatory. The attention to emotions and how they were manipulated serves as an expost explanation of a relatively successful

political mobilisation in the Pomaks' protest against social and economic marginalisation described by Mihaylova and also in Justine Golanska-Ryan's study of the strategic use of emotional rhetoric in a political campaign launched by two Polish political parties opposed to the country's accession to the European Union. However, we are left wondering about what difference emotions really made in these cases since none of the studies present their case in a comparative perspective. At least a reference to similar empirical cases or studies showing that, for instance, a lack of emotional mobilisation leads to a different political outcome, would make their case for an explanatory potential of the study of emotions more convincing. One can only agree with Alaina Lemon's careful critique in the 'Afterword', where she suggests that: 'in future studies, and in order to better understand those cases where emotions are politically effective, we need also to attend to cases where they do not' (p. 216).

Why focus exclusively on post-socialism? 'In many parts of the region the tumultuous political and economic developments have generated strong feelings, ranging from hope and euphoria to disappointment, envy, disillusionment, sorrow, loneliness and hatred', reads the introduction (p. 2). The decision to make 'post-socialism' the main title of the volume and to select contributions only from post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe is problematic. How do we know that emotions are so critical and/or unique to the region if the book does not present any comparison with similar cases of social struggles for economic justice, political mobilisations, contestation of property relations, or the occurrence of emergencies, such as flooding, in 'the West'? For sure, some of these processes have taken on particular shapes in post-socialist countries, and this is well reflected in the studies. However, the book itself does not show convincingly enough that the given emotional underpinning of pol-

itics is necessarily specific to post-socialist contexts. Thus, it is questionable whether the exclusive post-socialist framing of these studies brings any additional value to the analyses. Or does it rather risk essentialising post-socialist societies as emotional reservoirs of a particular kind?

Moreover, despite an introductory urge for 'sensitivity to contextual specificity' (p. 5), the label 'post-socialist' is attached to a variety of highly diverse phenomena throughout the book, such as community, consumption behaviour, village politics, trade, suffering, or cultural styles, without providing a sufficient explanation of their connection with the socialist era. Furthermore, the use of expressions such as 'post-socialist emotional life' (p. 34) imposes homogeneity rather than encouraging attention to contextual specificity. Would anthropologists dare to use the notion of 'western emotional life' with same ease? Or would they substitute 'western' for 'post-socialist' when arguing that 'In post-socialist landscapes, trust and mistrust are basic in political practices on local, regional and national levels...' (p. 209)?

Finally, there is a problem with the presentation of the methodological choices made by the authors of the studies. In fact, we learn very little about them. At most, the period and the length of the researchers' fieldwork are indicated. The majority of the studies do not describe the 'sources' of their empirical data, such as the numbers and characteristics of informants and the settings of the observations. This is particularly problematic when gossip and rumours become prime sources and examples in the study of the emotional dynamics of local politics. In the contribution by Don Kalb and Herman Tak, situated in the Polish city of Wrocław, hit by flooding in 1997, rumours are referred to as a vehicle of public fear and panic and an expression of citizens' distrust in the authorities, but also as 'a safety valve' for these emotions (p. 200). Despite having such an important

role in the analysis, the authors give no indication of how they recorded and analysed these rumours. Thus they inadvertently situate themselves as neutral observers exercising a 'view from nowhere' – a perspective long criticised in anthropology.

Many of the studies in this volume provide valuable and well-researched insights into Central and Eastern European societies. However, attention to emotions would be more beneficial if treated as a sensitising device, which would indeed be enriching for (not just) anthropological accounts, rather than being treated as the primary tool and/or object of exploration. In sum, the overarching focus on emotions wrapped in 'post-socialist packaging' blurs more than it reveals.

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**Hynek Jeřábek: *Paul Lazarsfeld's Research Methodology – Biography, Methods, Famous Projects***

Prague 2006: The Karolinum Press, 136 pp.

This book focuses on the life and works of Paul Lazarsfeld, who was one of the founders of many of the methods that are today taken for granted in the empirical social sciences. It is divided into four parts dealing with, respectively, Lazarsfeld's research biography, his methodological innovations, his famous research projects and some of his main findings. The first chapter divides Lazarsfeld's life into different main stages, starting with his life in Vienna, moving on to his early years in the United States, and ending with the Columbia years. There follow two general sections on Lazarsfeld's organisational work in science and critics and the reaction to his sociology. Opening with his birth in Vienna on 13 February 1901, the chapter follows Lazarsfeld through the various posts of his career, from his first job as a mathematics teacher to his last title

as Professor Emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh. It simultaneously tells the stories of the different research centres he established: the *Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle* in Vienna (Research Centre of Economic Psychology), the Newark University Research Center in New Jersey, the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University and its transformation to the Bureau of Applied Social Sciences at Columbia University. The author highlights the fact that these institutes dealt with entirely new topics, such as market research, communications research, and altogether new forms of research methodology. Further, the chapter presents the publications and the projects Lazarsfeld implemented over time. Attention is also devoted to some of the main critics of Lazarsfeld's sociology, including T. Adorno and his labelling of Lazarsfeld's work as 'administrative research', C.W. Mills' criticism of 'abstract empiricism', and T.N. Clark's attack on the negation of the individuality of the researchers involved in the 'Columbia Sociology Machine'.

The second chapter looks at Lazarsfeld's contributions to the field of sociology, such as reason analysis – the method he developed for revealing the model of decision-making processes – and the 'programme analyser', the focused interview, and panel analysis. Considerable space is devoted to survey analysis and the principles of the elaboration model. In a discussion of latent structure analysis, the basic concepts behind it – response pattern, probability, property space, principle of local independence, accounting equations and trace lines – are all outlined and described, as is the concept of trace lines as the core idea of this method. The section on mathematical sociology highlights how Lazarsfeld developed not only the mathematical background to latent structure analysis but also the model of the dichotomic cube and the 16-fold table, all of which examine the effect of dichotomous variables on depend-